

CATHERINE'S LITERARY WORK

violent death. " I would have thee know that, to save him from the eternal damnation which thou seest he had incurred, I allowed this to happen, in order that by his blood he might have life in the blood of My only-begotten Son. For I had not forgotten the reverence and love which he bore to Mary, the most sweet Mother of My only-begotten Son, to whom it is given by My goodness, for reverence of the Word, that whoso holds her in due reverence, be he a just man or a sinner, shall never be taken or devoured by the infernal demon. She is as a bait set by My goodness to take all rational creatures." * Catherine's own miraculous communions, when her Divine Bridegroom intervened to give her the food of Angels which the priests would fain have denied her, show God's providential dealings with souls that hunger for the sweet Sacrament.² There are three states of the human soul: those of mortal sin, imperfect love, and perfect charity; and in each God's Providence acts in diverse ways to draw her to Himself.

One of the means He uses to draw the imperfect from their imperfection is an absorbing devotion for a fellow-creature, the *amor amicitiae* of which the Angelical Doctor writes, the kind of love of which Dante had given the supreme exposition in the *Vita Nuova*. By such a love, the soul is exercised in virtue and raised above herself; the heart is stripped of all sensitive passion and disordered affection. By the perfection of this love can be measured the perfection of the soul's love of God. When one who loves in this way sees himself deprived of the delight he used to have in familiar intercourse with the person loved, and sees that person now more intimately associated with another than with himself, the very pain 'that he feels will teach him to know himself, and will spur him on to hatred of his own selfishness and to love of virtue. He will humbly repute himself unworthy of the desired consolation, and will be assured that the virtue, for which

¹ Cap. 139. Cf. the salvation of Buonconte da Montefeltro, *Purg.* v. 100-107. Catherine alludes to this case in similar words in Letter 272 (90), Probably, either Niccolò di Toldo or Trincio Trinci is the person meant.

² Cap. 142. Cf. *Legfntta*, II. xii. 4-14 (§§ 316-324).